



Michigan B.A.S.S. Nation



Dedicated to Youth, Conservation and Bass Anglers of Michigan

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Thank you to Senators Hansen, Jones, Casperson, Booher, Marleau, Jansen and Emmons for sponsoring Senate Bill 869, and to the members of the Committee on Outdoor Recreation and Tourism for giving us your time.

Michigan B.A.S.S. Nation supported Proposal G in 1996 along with 63% of Michiganders, and Public Act 21 signed into law May 2013, to give the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) equal authority to manage fish and game scientifically. We've been working for scientific management of Michigan largemouth and smallmouth bass since the 1980s. Passing Senate Bill 869 is a necessary, important next step to give the procedural authority Public Act 21 intended to the NRC for bass, so we can move forward with the year-round bass fishing season we've been working for all these long years.

Michigan is one of only 4 states out of 49 in the U.S.A. with a statewide closed bass season. Passing SB 869 will simply remove the law restriction limiting Michigan bass fishing opportunity to the end of May until December 31, and limiting our best and most famous bass lake – Lake St. Clair – the most by keeping it closed to bass fishing until the third Friday in June. That's kind of like holding your starting quarterback out of the game until the third quarter.

Panfish anglers can generally fish almost all waters all year. Walleye, pike, trout and salmon anglers can generally fish all year at least on much of the Great Lakes. These are all high harvest fish. Michigan bass anglers, who voluntarily release an average of 80% to 92% of the legal-sized bass they catch, are limited the most with a statewide closed season despite bass not being a harvest species.

We believe dissatisfaction among anglers who can't target their favorite fish all year contributes to our issues of utmost importance – retaining anglers and recruiting new anglers – equaling lost fishing license sales and funding for Natural Resources protection and management through excise fees. According to studies the later in the year anglers are able to start targeting their favorite species, the more likely they are to decide not to buy a fishing license that year.

We also lose significant revenue for our Natural Resources Economy due to anglers traveling out of Michigan to bass fish elsewhere each spring, and because nonresident anglers attracted to our abundant waters are unable to legally fish for bass during the spring, though the majority of these anglers come from states that allow year-round bass fishing, including Indiana and Ohio next door.

The 2011 US Fish and Wildlife Survey (USFWS) showed 589,000 resident and nonresident anglers fished for Michigan bass making bass the number one game fish, second only to panfish in number of anglers, and **first** in number of days spent fishing at 8,739,000 angler days – almost 15 bass fishing days/ year/angler. At the USFWS average trip-related expenditure of \$39/day that makes bass fishing gas, motel/hotel, food and similar a \$341 Million/year economic boost to Michigan's Natural Resource Economy. That amount does not include fishing tackle, boats, motors and other gear. I can tell you from personal experience bass anglers spend a lot of money on equipment.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) recently reported that 16% of surveyed anglers said they would fish in a spring catch-and-release season – which is what we are proposing – legal catch-and-release from January 1 until the Memorial weekend opener. At 16% of 589,000 anglers each additional bass fishing day is another \$3.67 million of trip-related expenditure alone towards Michigan's Natural Resource Economy.

Passing SB 869 to remove bass season restrictions from state law allows us to continue working with the MDNR and the NRC for the year-round bass season anglers in 45 states enjoy.